





# MONASTIC AND CONVENTUAL INSTITUTIONS.

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## SPEECH

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

BY

C. N. NEWDEGATE, ESQ., M.P.,

ON THE 3RD OF MARCH, 1865,

WITH THE CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

THE REVEREND DR. ULLATHORNE,  
THE HON. C. LANGDALE, JUN.,  
SIR CHARLES CLIFFORD,  
THE REV. J. AKEROYD,

AND

C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.,

WHICH ENSUED; AND

LETTER FROM CHARLES B. MANDER, ESQ., J.P.,

To the *Times* of April 14th, 1870.

WITH PREFACE BY THE REV. G. R. BADENOCH,

SECRETARY OF THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION SOCIETY.

SCOTTISH REFORMATION SOCIETY,  
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## PREFACE.

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THE annexed Correspondence originated in the motion, made by Mr. Newdegate, in the House of Commons, on 3rd of March, 1865, for a Committee to inquire "into the Existence, Character, and Increase of Monastic and Conventual Establishments or Societies in Great Britain." Mr. Newdegate used striking facts and forcible arguments in favour of the Inquiry; his speech was afterwards printed and widely circulated in Great Britain and the Colonies, by the Scottish Reformation Society; and it has been considered that this Correspondence ought likewise to be circulated, as illustrating the tactics of the Ultramontane party.

Romish Institutions are still rapidly increasing in this country, while the arrogant pretensions constantly advanced by the agents of the Church of Rome, and the seeming anxiety of governments to grant concession after concession, may well afford reason for uneasiness as to the future of these realms. The Ultramontane party now rule the councils of the Church of Rome. Their tactics are no less multifarious than dangerous. They would, if possible, crush all freedom of discussion touching their establishments, and for this purpose, when any Member of the House of Commons cannot be silenced by clamour within the House, adopt other means of annoyance, and thus endeavour to deter anyone from attempting to investigate their system and institutions, seeking, the while, to create sympathy in the minds of those who have not studied the subject,

and may be carried away by general statements or casuistry.

The objects of Mr. Newdegate's motion were most reasonable. He desired to extend "*the legitimate legal protection of the civil power of this Protestant country to the inmates of the convents within it.*" If these institutions in Great Britain are not like the convents in other countries, which have been suppressed or placed under civil supervision; if there be nothing in them to conceal, why do those, who are so loud in the praises of those establishments, seem so sensitive as to the character of particular convents, and object to a public inquiry? They evidently "love darkness rather than the light."

This Correspondence is moreover important, not merely as illustrating the disposition and tactics of the Ultramontane party, but because it shows that Mr. Newdegate's firmness has brought them face to face with privilege of Parliament; it has also proved how essential that privilege is to the freedom of debate, and how effectively it may be used by any member of Parliament, who contemplates the object of Mr. Newdegate's motion, not merely in self-defence, but for the protection of any witnesses, whom it may be necessary to call before Committees of either House of Parliament.

The power of the Papal party in this country is formidable, and is increasing; but, as yet, it has not overcome, though it has often encroached upon, and procured the misapplication of, the power of Parliament, which it constantly, though often covertly, defies.

G. R. B.

MR. NEWDEGATE  
ON  
MONASTIC AND CONVENTUAL INSTITUTIONS.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 1865.

ON the order of the day being read for the House to go into Committee of Supply,

Mr. NEWDEGATE moved that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the existence, character, and increase of monastic or conventual establishments or societies in Great Britain. He said: It will be in the recollection of the House that, on the 8th April last, I ventured to make a motion in the House for a Committee to inquire into the case of a Mr. Smee, detailed in a petition which I presented to the House, with reference to certain circumstances connected with the last illness, burial, and the disposal of the property, of a Mr. Hutchison, a relation of his, who became a member of the Society of St. Philip Neri, or Society of Oratorians, which has an establishment at Brompton, and also had a burial-ground at St. Mary's, Sydenham. It was alleged on that occasion that this case was to be adjudged by the tribunals of the country; and a circumstance occurred which tended to divert the attention of the House from the conclusion of the motion which I then made, which, going beyond the imme-

diate case presented by the petition of Mr. Smee, proposed to inquire into the conventual and monastic institutions which have increased so largely in this country. It happened that Mr. Smee, without consulting me—without my knowledge, and without my consent, although he had placed his case in my hands—addressed a letter to the Duchess of Norfolk, and printed and circulated that letter the day before without my knowledge or consent. Perhaps no Member of this House had more reason to complain of that proceeding than myself. I had no opportunity of replying on that occasion; but I now beg to assure the House that that letter was printed and circulated without my knowledge or consent. I allude to this circumstance because great use was made of that letter for the purpose of diverting the attention of the House from the more extended matter of my motion; and upon a division, in consequence, I may say, to a great extent, of the circulation of that letter, the motion was defeated. I am happy to say, however, that the House afterwards gave me reason to believe that the circumstances which I had adduced connected with the burials in the burial-ground at Sydenham—the inaccurate description of the dead, and the non-registration of the burials—were circumstances worthy of the attention of the Legislature; for I have this proof, that the Honourable and Learned Member for Guildford introduced a bill for the registration of burials conducted in cemeteries other than those of the Church of England. That bill passed both Houses of Parliament by unanimous consent, and is now the law of the land. The House will excuse me for adverting to this fact, because I wish to show them that, when I venture to make a motion in this House, it is never done for



the mere purpose of agitation, far less for purposes of party triumph ; but with an honest intention of effecting an improvement in the law, and performing my duty as an independent Member, by suggesting matters to the House which I respectfully deem worthy of their consideration. And this was the case on that occasion. During the debate to which I have referred, allusion was necessarily made to the Society of Oratorians ; and a petition was presented from the Rev. Mr. Harrison, of Bugbrook, in Northamptonshire, complaining that his son, a minor, when captain of the school at Westminster, had been seduced—I use the term advisedly—into that establishment contrary to his parental authority—had been kept there in defiance of his parents' will—and had been induced to enter that monastic order, for such I must term it, to the detriment of his prospects in life. I know not why, but the Committee on Public Petitions have not thought proper to print this petition in their report. I must express my surprise, for a more important petition has seldom been presented to the House. It was presented by the Honourable Member for Northamptonshire, the representative of this injured gentleman ; and it is with the consent of his family that I now ask permission of the House to read this petition. It runs thus :—

“ That on the 1st of March, 1861, your petitioner's son was captain of the Westminster School, and would in the course of a few weeks have obtained his election to a junior studentship at Christ's Church, Oxford.

“ That up to Sunday the 3d of March, in the same year, your petitioner's son had never held the slightest communication whatever with any Roman Catholic priest ; that at one o'clock on that day he was introduced to Father John Bowden, a priest of the Oratory

at Brompton, to be shown, as he supposed, over that establishment; that he was detained in the Oratory by various invitations and by other circumstances for the remainder of the day, and was finally baptized at nine o'clock the same night, with the knowledge and consent of the Superior of the said Oratory, and for the express purpose of debarring your petitioner from the exercise of his just rights and authority as a parent.

“That your petitioner’s son was at that very time in an infirm state of health, and was actually under medical treatment; that, after his confession in Father Bowden’s room, at a quarter before nine o’clock at night, he felt so prostrated as to be obliged to lie down on a sofa; and that he was unwell, and suffering from headache, at the time of his baptism.

“That, in a letter, addressed to his sister, on the 8th of March, your petitioner’s son described his reception into the Church of Rome as a sin, and as having been obtained by fraudulent means.

“That your petitioner, on the removal of his son from Westminster, renewed the expression of his intention to educate him for the Indian civil service, which offer he seemed inclined to accept, but that the Superior, or other Fathers of the Oratory offered him (as your petitioner is credibly informed) £100 per annum if he would become a postulant for the novitiate in their establishment.

“That in consequence of the infirm state of his health, your petitioner’s son, shortly after his removal from Westminster School, was sent by your petitioner to reside for several weeks with a relation at the seaside, where everything necessary for his health and comfort was most amply supplied; that the Superior of the Oratory gave him three pounds to enable him

to go to the Oratory whenever he pleased, notwithstanding your petitioner's most positive commands to the contrary.

“That your petitioner's son did go to the Oratory before the time fixed for the expiration of his visit; that he became a postulant, and was permitted to commence his novitiate some months before his nineteenth year, notwithstanding the strong letter of remonstrance your petitioner wrote to the Superior, in which he forbade such a violation of parental authority.

“Your petitioner therefore prays your Honourable House to inquire into the truth of the above allegations, and to adopt such measures as to your wisdom shall seem meet for the protection of families and the vindication of parental authority.

The petition is signed “J. H. HARRISON.” This petition has not, I think, received the attention which it ought. The House will therefore excuse me,—as I was consulted by that gentleman before he prepared the petition, as I recommended him to seek legal advice in order that it might bear the strictest investigation, and as I know he accepted my advice,—if I say that I think that petition worthy of the attention of the House. (Hear, hear.) I wish now to advert to another circumstance connected with the debate of last session, to which I have referred, since, as I have said, I had no power or opportunity of reply. During that debate the late Attorney-General for Ireland (Mr. O'Hagan) said:—

“Every one belonging to his religious creed (that is, the Roman Catholic) knew that—which it was no shame to the Honourable Member for North Warwickshire if he did not know—the constitution of the community at Brompton did not in the smallest degree

bring them within the purview of the law. Persons who belonged to the Oratory at Brompton—those who belonged to any community of that distinguished Order—were not bound by vows such as the Honourable Member appeared to suppose. It was a matter of perfect notoriety that they lived together in community. They were secular priests, associating voluntarily; not bound to remain together for a single hour; each holding his property, and able to dispose of it just as he desired.”

Now, that statement was in accordance with the evidence afterwards adduced before the courts in this country, and it was the paraphrase, and contained the substance, of the evidence adduced in 1855 before the Provincial Court of Genoa, in Italy, when the constitution of this very Order was tested by that tribunal, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the Order came within the law for the suppression of monasteries in Italy; and the Court, in the first instance, decided that that description of the order was correct, and acted upon the supposition that these Oratorians had been wrongly included in the decree which was to give effect to the law passed by the Italian Legislature in 1855 for the suppression of the convents and monasteries of Jesuits, Franciscans, and other regular Orders of the Church of Rome in Italy. But the following year this question was raised again by appeal in the same Provincial Court of Genoa, and that Court finally decided that the Order of Oratorians came within the provisions of the law of 1855—that the decree for giving effect to that law correctly included that Order; and, to the best of my belief, as that decision was considered final, that Order is suppressed as being one of the regular Orders of the Church of Rome, although

not, perhaps, coming technically and strictly within the provisions of the Act of 1829—the Act for the Relief of Roman Catholic Disabilities. I wish to make these statements to the House because the conduct of the Oratorians in the case of Miss M'Dermot has excited so much attention, and is not unlikely to come before the courts again. It has already been investigated before the magistrates; and it is, I think, important that the House should know that the Italian Parliament and Government, who must have been more cognisant of and possessed more knowledge on these subjects than the late Attorney-General for Ireland thought the Honourable Member for North Warwickshire possessed, have decided that this is one of the Orders which it is expedient for the welfare of the Italian people should be suppressed. I have ventured to ask the House to appoint a Committee in the terms of my motion, and for this reason. It is notorious to everyone that of late years there has been a most enormous, and, I may say, unprecedented, increase in these monastic and conventual establishments in this country. Let me show the House exactly what I ask. Last session I gave notice for a return which should include some information as to the locality of these establishments, the character of their inmates, and the nature of their organization. The Right Honourable Gentleman the Secretary for the Home Department told me that I should find this information in documents in the Registrar-General's office. I have applied, but there are no such documents in the possession of the Registrar-General. Well, then, this House, acting in the spirit of the law of 1829, takes cognisance of convents of women, in the terms of the Act, as establishments the existence of which are at least recognised,

if not protected. These same clauses in the Act of 1829 strictly prohibit the establishment in this country of the seminaries or houses of the Jesuits, and of the other male Orders of the Church of Rome ; and I will call the recollection of the House to this fact, that these clauses of the Act of 1829 are recited and re-enacted in the Act of 1860 for the protection and due administration of Roman Catholic charities. Therefore, let the House remember that by its own act these clauses are not obsolete, but were revived only five years ago. Well, then, it is urged—" Oh, but these are private establishments, especially the convents, with which the Legislature has no more right to deal, and of which it takes no more cognisance, than of establishments consisting of families of Roman Catholics, or of families belonging to any other denomination." Now, look at what you have done. You have provided for the due administration of property belonging to these convents, as though it were possessed by a quasi-corporation. You have forbidden the acquisition of property by the male monastic Orders in any such character ; and by the Act of last session you have provided for the registration of burials within the precincts of these monasteries and convents. I say, then, that the plea that these are private institutions in the sense in which they have been described as similar to private families comes too late. That interpretation is adverse to the sense of every Roman Catholic country. In France there are strict provisions for the regulation of these establishments. The Mayor of the arrondissement has a direct power of visitation. The law provides that monastic vows shall not be binding for more than five years. Then take the case of Prussia. Here the law has been very much relaxed since 1850. Formerly there were

strict provisions for the regulation of these places ; but they are still kept within the cognisance of the State. The present form of the administration in Prussia so nearly and so practically approaches the despotic form of Government, that the power reserved to the Crown for the visitation of these places, and of judging whether admission to these establishments is justifiable, is found to be amply sufficient for every purpose of guarding the personal freedom and property of those who may think fit to consign themselves to them. Then, turning to Italy. Italy has found it necessary for the establishment of her freedom to suppress a large number of these monastic institutions, and for the sake of her morality to suppress many of the convents. Italy, in 1863, was but following the example of England at the time of the Reformation ; the example of France in 1798 ; and the example of Spain, bigoted Spain, in 1837. And with this movement throughout the Continent, I trust the Parliament of England will forgive me if, in the face of the rapid increase of these establishments at this time, I call upon it to make some inquiry into the localities in which they are to be found, as to the character of the Orders by which they are held, and to include in that inquiry the nature of the discipline carried out within them. (Cheers.) To give the House some idea of the increase of these establishments, I find in England and Wales there were religious houses of men in 1841 but 1 ; of convents, 16 ; of colleges, 9. But in 1851 there were religious houses of men, 17 ; convents, 53 ; colleges, 10. And now how stands the account ? In 1865 there are religious houses of men, 58 ; convents, 187 ; colleges, 10 ; and if to the account we add 14 convents for Scotland, there are 201 convents established in this country, and pos-

sessing, to my knowledge, in the Midland Counties, considerable real property as well as personal estate. I wish, in addressing myself to this subject, to say a few words in order to dispel the illusion that this motion is a mere ebullition of Protestant bigotry. I will recall for one moment the attention of the Honourable Members to some passages in the history of their own country, which, I think, must have escaped their attention. I find in a work of Lord Lyttelton, the ancestor of the accomplished peer who now bears that name, that in the reign of Henry II. the rapid increase of these establishments—about as rapid as that which is now taking place—was considered a grievous detriment to the country. Lord Lyttelton says,—

“The great increase of religious houses must be reckoned among the evils of this age (Henry II.) The author of the ‘*Notitia Monastica*’ computes the number of such houses built in England during the reigns of Henry I., Stephen, and Henry II., at no less than 300. And Mr. Inett asserts that more monasteries and other religious societies were founded in that kingdom during the single reign of Henry I. than in 500 years before. But he rightly observes that this was not peculiar to this nation. The high opinion of the merit of such foundations infused into the minds of the laity by the divines of those days, the hopes of compounding in this manner with the Deity for the greatest offences, but more especially the liberty granted by the Pope of commuting for vows made to go to the holy wars by benefactions of this kind, filled all Europe with convents. In the year 1152 the Cistercian Order, which had been founded in 1098, had no fewer than 500. Among other causes



of the increase of monasteries in this kingdom may be reckoned the civil war with which it was afflicted during the reign of King Stephen; for many of the nobility engaged in those troubles endeavoured to atone for the pillage of the people, and other crimes they had committed, by raising or endowing religious houses, and others desired to secure for themselves and their children a quiet asylum in these places. The pernicious consequences of such numbers of men and women being confined to a life of celibacy were grievously felt in the reign of Henry II., by continuing and increasing the depopulation of the country which the commotions in that of his predecessor had occasioned. Nor was it a small inconvenience to the Government of this monarch, in his disputes with the Pope, that he had so many persons in his realm who, by their separation from society, and the nature of their institutions, were more devoted to the see of Rome than the secular clergy, which difference showed itself upon several occasions in the conduct of both. And the practice of exempting monks from the proper authority of the diocesan bishops increased this mischief."

Nothing towards abating these evils was done in the reigns of Henry III. or IV. Henry V., a Roman Catholic sovereign, found it necessary to suppress a great number of monasteries. In Kennett's "Cases of Impropriations," page 119, it is stated that,—

"Had the monasteries been dissolved in Henry V.'s reign, when the bill was brought into Parliament for that purpose, it would have been more regularly and justly conducted than in an after reign; that by this would all have reverted to the parish churches, and the clergy would have gained as much by it as the

Government. This appears from the sequel, that when the King, instead of the English monasteries, had only the alien priories given him, he seized on no part of the tithes, but on the lands and tenements that were before of lay fee, and might justly return into lay hands. These, too, he intended to have employed for breeding up a more learned clergy, declaring it was his design to found a college of divines and artists, and to settle upon the said college the lands of the alien priories dissolved, if he had not been prevented by death. In the first act of dissolution there was a saving to the interest of strangers, travellers, and poor, by binding the new possessors of any site or precinct of the religious houses to keep, or cause to be kept, an honest continual house and household in the same site or precinct." . . . .

"In a preamble written by the King's own hand to another Act, it was declared to be an intent that the endowments of monasteries might be turned to better use, God's word better set forth, children brought up in learning, clerks nourished in the Universities, and exhibition for ministers of the Church. Divers of the visitors themselves did petition the King to leave some of the religious houses for the benefit of the country; and Latimer moved that two or three might be left in every shire for pious uses. I have seen an original letter from Latimer to the Lord Cromwell (Cleopatra, E. iv., fol. 264) to intercede with the King that Malvern Abbey might be left standing for the better performance of the duties of preaching, praying, and keeping hospitality."

Blackstone, on the same subject, observes that "the spirit of the nation being so much raised against foreigners, that about this time, in the reign of

Henry V., the alien priories, or abbeys for foreign monks, were suppressed, and their lands given to the Crown. And no further attempts were afterwards made in support of these foreign jurisdictions." I will quote, besides, another historical authority, which I wonder should have escaped the observation of the Honourable and Learned Members of this House. I find in Hallam's "Middle Ages," vol ii., pages 366-7,—

"The virtues, indeed, or supposed virtues, which had induced a credulous generation to enrich so many of the monastic orders, were not long preserved. We must reject, in the excess of our candour, all testimonies that the Middle Ages present, from the solemn declaration of councils and reports of judicial inquiry, to the casual evidence of common fame in the ballad or romance, if we would extenuate the general corruption of those institutions. In vain new rules of discipline were devised or the old corrected by reforms. Many of their worst vices grew so naturally out of their mode of life, that a stricter discipline could have no tendency to extirpate them. Such were the frauds I have already noticed, and the whole scheme of hypocritical austerities. Their extreme licentiousness was sometimes hardly concealed by the cowl of sanctity. I know not by what right we should disbelieve the reports of the visitation under Henry VIII., entering, as they do, into a multitude of specific charges, both probable in their nature and consonant to the unanimous opinion of the world. Doubtless, there were many communities as well as individuals to whom none of these reproaches would apply. In the very best view, however, that can be taken of monasteries, their existence is deeply in-

jurious to the general morals of a nation. They withdraw men of pure conduct and conscientious principles from the exercise of social duties, and leave the common mass of human vice more unmixed. Such men are always inclined to form schemes of ascetic perfection, which can only be fulfilled in retirement; but, in the strict rules of monastic life, and under the influence of a grovelling superstition, their virtue lost all its usefulness. They fell implicitly into the snares of crafty priests, who made submission to the Church not only the condition, but the measure, of all praise.”

Again, in Hallam’s “Constitutional History,” it is stated what an enormous property these institutions possess; and in quoting the passage, I would remind the House that the figures he gives should be multiplied by seven or eight, to ascertain the value in our present money. He says,—

“The income of the monasteries prior to their dissolution in the reign of Henry VIII. has been variously estimated. Dr. Lingard, on the authority of Nasmyth’s edition of ‘Tanner’s Notitia Monastica,’ puts the annual revenue of all the monastic houses at £142,914. This would only be one-twentieth part of the rental of the kingdom, if Hume were right in estimating that at three millions. But this is certainly by much too high. The author of ‘Harmer’s Observations on Burnet,’ as I have mentioned above, says the monks will be found not to have possessed above one-fifth of the kingdom, and in value, by reason of their long leases, not one-tenth.”

The same author (Hallam), having described the mode in which the monasteries were dissolved and the property appropriated, observes,—

“And better it had been that these revenues should

thus from age to age have been expended in liberal hospitality, in discerning charity, in the promotion of industry and cultivation, in the active duties or ever generous amusements of life, than in maintaining a host of ignorant and inactive monks, in deceiving the populace by superstitious pageantry, or in the encouragement of idleness and mendicity."

I thank the House for having allowed me to read these short historical extracts ; but what are the facts ? Was the suppression of the monasteries previous to the Reformation the act of Henry VIII. alone ? The other day, in a lecture at Bath, the Rev. Hobart Seymour, whose knowledge of the subject is scarcely exceeded by that of any one I am acquainted with, gave a full account of the process. It was in the reign of Henry VII., that eminently Catholic King, that Cardinal Morton (an English cardinal) applied to the Pope for permission to reform a number of monasteries. I wrote to Mr. Seymour on this subject, and he sent me extracts from the bull, and a copy of Cardinal Morton's letter addressed to the bishops in this country ; and there is nothing in the reports made in the time of Henry VIII. which conveys, in terms more explicit or more powerful, clear evidence of the deep corruption which prevailed in these institutions. I should like, but I forbear, to read the terms in which the Pope's brief to Cardinal Morton is couched. Cardinal Morton, in his letter, declares that nuns were violated and murders committed in these convents and monasteries. And when I am told that the objections to the revival of these institutions which are so generally felt are the fruit of a mere Protestant prejudice, the House will forgive me if I recall these historical facts to the memory of Roman Catholic Members, that it was an

English cardinal who first proposed, and that it was a Pope who first authorised, the suppression of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. The Rev. H. Seymour, in his lecture at Bath, on the 6th of February last, said,—

“ It will be recollected that one of the measures that immediately preceded the Reformation of the Church of England was a measure for the suppression of the monasteries. That measure has been denounced by our Roman Catholic friends as a measure of robbery, and spoliation, and sacrilege—as a measure of such a character, that none but a heretic could have devised it, and none but a tyrant could have sanctioned it. Perhaps, Sir, they are nearer the mark than they themselves are aware ; for that measure, whatever was its character, was originally devised by a cardinal, and sanctioned by a Pope. (Hear, hear.) The facts of the case are these :—Cardinal Morton was Papal Legate in this country at the Court of Henry VII. He found the monasteries in such a state of demoralisation and disorganisation, that he applied to the Pope for the requisite powers to amend and improve them. Pope Innocent VIII., then at Rome, immediately complied with the request, and issued his rescript or bull giving the requisite authority. But inveterate abuses take long to eradicate, and before the work had well begun Cardinal Morton lay in his grave, Henry VII. was gathered to his fathers, and Pope Innocent VIII. had gone the way of all flesh. We find next Cardinal Wolsey upon the scene as Papal Legate at the Court of Henry VIII. Cardinal Wolsey found some of the monasteries in a state of disorder—disorder in their finances, disorder in their morals—and he applied to the Pope for the requisite powers, not, like his prede-

cessor to amend and reform, but to suppress the monasteries. (Hear, hear.) Pope Clement VII., then at Rome immediately complied with his request, and issued his bull or rescript to the Cardinal Legate, authorizing him as he saw fit to suppress all and every monastery in the whole realm of England. So that if this measure were a measure of robbery, and spoliation, and sacrilege—if it were a measure that none but a heretic could devise, and none but a tyrant could sanction—there is no truth more certain than that it was devised by Cardinal Wolsey, and sanctioned by Clement VII. (Hear, hear.) The Cardinal immediately proceeded to his work. He suppressed off-hand forty of the lesser monasteries, and with a part of the proceeds he endowed Christ Church, Oxford. Some of the larger monasteries, frightened by these proceedings, surrendered, and were suppressed; and the Cardinal was going lightly and jauntily on his course of suppression, when the great quarrel and confusion arose between the King and the Cardinal, and then with the Pope. In the midst of this confusion, which was a great day for England, we could see looming in the distance something that looked like rogues falling out, and honest men coming by their own; and Henry VIII., who was as shrewd a man as ever lived, fixed his hands on the Papal bull or rescript authorizing the suppression of monasteries. These facts seem to me to prove that the suppression of monasteries is not materially a Protestant measure, but that it is essentially a Roman Catholic measure.” (Hear, hear.) Honourable Members of the Roman Catholic persuasion forget that, when Henry VIII. succeeded to the throne, he was more eminently Roman Catholic, perhaps, than any sovereign of his time. Why, the

Pope himself endowed him with the title of *Fidei Defensor*; for Henry, being an accomplished scholar, had written an answer to Luther. Henry VIII., through Cardinal Wolsey, applied for power to suppress the monasteries. The Cardinal agreed, and obtained the sanction and authority of the Pope to the measure. Therefore, to tell any Honourable Member who, like myself, has been educated at Christ Church, Oxford, that this was not the fact—to tell the Right Honourable Gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the college of which he is so bright an ornament was not established by funds derived from the source I have described—is really to presume on an incredible amount of ignorance and want of research. (Hear, hear.) Why, it was Cardinal Wolsey himself, the Pope's Legate, who took the funds from the monasteries to found Christ Church; and a blessed work it was. (Cheers and laughter.) Therefore, when I ask the House to pay some attention to the rapid growth of that which, in the deliberate judgment of two English cardinals, and two successive Popes, before the Reformation, was held to be a national disease, I hope Honourable Members will not think me presumptuous in expressing the strong public feeling which exists, that it is the duty of the Legislature to inform itself by its own inquiries with regard to an increase of these institutions, which causes so much uneasiness throughout the land. If the Legislature of England persistently ignores the existence of these establishments, and only trusts to the casual information which, with extreme difficulty, is procured as to certain malpractices that have come to light—if the Legislature continues in this state of wilful obtusity—why, it stands to reason



that now, when the Roman Catholic countries of the Continent find it necessary to eject the inmates of these institutions from their shores, they will find a harbour here, and that we in England shall inherit the evils from which the Continent is rapidly being delivered. (Cheers.) That is a fact which stands to reason. Almost every Member of this House knows that foreign monks and foreign nuns come here, some to take direction of establishments already existing, and others to found establishments of their own. Thus we have growing up in this country the very evil at which Henry V., Roman Catholic Sovereign of England in the thirteenth century, aimed a blow by the suppression of the alien monasteries. Is it reasonable, then, to ask us to ignore these facts? That the public do not think it reasonable, is evident from the number of petitions which have been presented to the House. (Hear, hear.) And now I will touch for one moment on the case of Miss M'Dermot. What is the evidence in that case? It is this. Miss M'Dermot, being then a minor of the age of 15, was withdrawn from the natural protection of her mother, and the case was brought before one of the metropolitan magistrates, Mr. Selfe. He declared that the law did not give him power to enforce the restoration of the child to her parent. In the kindness of his heart he used more private exertion than, I think, his official and judicial position justified him in doing, to accomplish the object which his humanity dictated—namely, the restoration of the daughter to her mother. The law was in that case violated, and what have we in evidence as to the mode in which it was resisted? Why, those priests who got possession of this young girl calumniated her character and the character of her

mother. Now, calumny against the characters of women, for the purpose of coercing them into submission, is a favourite weapon of the priests—(hear, hear)—and if it be not restrained, although I have great trust in the spirit of order among Englishmen, I warn this House lest a violation of peace should be excited. It was only yesterday I received the account of a young man, of 17 years of age, an undergraduate of Cambridge, having been, two years ago, induced to leave his parents' house for the purpose of entering a monastery in a distant county. His brothers heard of it, and went to the monastery, and told the Superior that, being a minor, they claimed him as his nearest of kin. The Superior would not listen to them, and resisted. The brothers said—"We do not come here to violate the law, but we know you have got our brother in your possession. We have four friends here, and if you do not give him up we will take him." (Cheers and laughter.) The Superior then yielded. If you put a stress of this kind upon Englishmen they will break loose. If an endeavour is made to withhold children from their parents, or a brother, being a minor, from his elder brothers who stand to him *in loco parentis*, you will find that the English people (as in many cases the American people have done) will take the law into their own hands, regardless of the consequences. (Cheers.) Then there is the case of Miss Ryan. As I believe other Members will speak of that, I will not dwell upon it; but it appears she was taken from a conventual establishment in this city, and transferred to a lunatic asylum in Belgium. She screamed, she struggled, she implored assistance from every passer-by; and it is admitted by the Government that those means for testing the sanity or insanity of this

poor girl which the law prescribes had not been complied with. It is stated that Dr. Miller, a distinguished medical practitioner, had given a certificate of insanity ; but I have a letter from Dr. Miller to say that he gave no certificate at all. (Hear.) I do not know what the Government mean to do in this case. The Corporation of Dover, who very properly interfered when they became cognisant of the facts, have been informed that the law officers of the Crown admit that the law was violated and set at nought, but they say that it was not done with a bad intention. (Cheers.) These are things which try the patience of Englishmen. (Cheers.) The English, of all nations in the world, are most orderly and attached to the law ; but once let them feel that there is some organisation in this country, especially if it be an organisation with a foreign connection, which can defy the law and set an example of lawlessness, and you will find them much more difficult to restrain, because the great characteristic of the English people is their devotion to the ties of family. (Loud cheers.) Once let John Bull put on the bulldog, and you will not find it very easy to make him loose his hold. I would not have ventured to bring this subject before the House if I had no facts which were not known to the House and to the public. These cases of Miss M'Dermot and Miss Ryan are fully before the House ; the Government and the public are cognisant of both. But there is a case of graver importance than either of these, of which there is direct and sworn evidence in existence, and of which, I believe, neither the Government, nor the House, nor the public are cognisant. There are convents in the Midland Counties ; there is one at Princethorpe in North Warwickshire, and under that convent are several under-

ground cells, with very strong doors and very good locks. The man who made these doors and fitted the locks when that Convent was built, afterwards worked for me. I speak of the late Mr. Charles Ball, master builder, of Nuncaton. I regret to say that he is now dead; but I know him to have been a trustworthy, truth-speaking man. He was at first told that the locks were not good enough, and that he must get better; accordingly he went to Birmingham and procured better locks. (Laughter and cheers.) Yes, I have reason to believe that these were most admirable locks. (A laugh.) Many years ago there was an escape from another convent—that at Atherstone. A poor nun had got across the road, and half-way across the next field. She was captured, and forced back into the Convent. Those who lived in the vicinity of the Convent became uneasy; and all we can say is, that we know that there were 15 cwt. of iron bars afterwards put in the windows of the Convent very soon after the escape. The neighbours did not like these ways of going on, and a close watch was maintained. All at once a priest connected with the Convent became wonderfully communicative. He said it was quite true that the discipline was infinitely too severe—that he was not in the least surprised that there had been an attempt at escape—that he was going to give up his situation—that he would no longer be connected with such an establishment—that the Order was about to be changed—that nuns of an Order with a less severe discipline were to succeed those whose practices had thus shocked the neighbours; and so the whole community—nuns, priest, confessor, and all—disappeared. Then there was the case at Derby. At Derby the

Corporation were uneasy because burials were known to have taken place within the Convent walls, while no deaths were registered. The whole case was brought before the Corporation and the Home Secretary. The same thing happened as at Atherstone. The community was removed; but something more was done—the Convent was pulled down. There is another case—and here I speak from sworn affidavits. In February, 1857, it became known that a nun had escaped from the Benedictine Priory at Colwich, in Staffordshire. She was seen at the back of the Convent on the line of railway; she went to the pointsman first, and then to the stationmaster. She was described as dreadfully emaciated, poorly clad, and in the greatest state of terror. She seemed anxious to conceal herself. After some time she went by the railway to Stafford; and at Stafford it fortunately happened that an old general officer was at the station and saw her. She went on to Birmingham. That night a telegraphic message passed up the line to the effect that Dr. Ullathorne would bring her back to the Convent. I shall not mention any other names in this case. He did bring her back; and the circumstance of her being brought back, closely veiled and closely watched, created an uneasiness in the public mind. We do not like these things in the Midland Counties. This happened not very long after the discovery and conviction of the poisoner Palmer. The Government would not allow us Midland Counties people to try that man. He was tried in London coolly, properly, according to due course of law, and hanged. That circumstance produced a good deal of excitement in the neighbourhood, and the people were more watchful in consequence,

for the crime was perpetrated at no great distance. There was the most extreme difficulty in procuring evidence in the case of this nun. I have a complete narrative of what was done in the case, written by a person whom I will not name ; but he took the matter up in the spirit of an Englishman. I have before me the name of the solicitor who was engaged in the inquiry. This person had never seen this young woman, but he was determined, from all he heard in the neighbourhood, that the circumstances of the case should be brought out. He was assisted on the occasion by the Protestant Alliance in London. Well, the priests and those connected with this Convent, when aware of the inquiry, threatened in the most malignant terms every person who might give evidence upon the subject. They obtained the dismissal of the clerk through whom the telegraphic message should have been sent. It was a most happy circumstance that he was absent from his post at the moment the message came to the office, and he had left another person to transmit the message. That person was not bound by the obligation of secrecy ; and it was through him that Superintendent Field, the detective officer, found out the name of the poor nun. It was not known for months, and would most probably never have been known had it not been for that happy accident. After Inspector Field came down, the terror which had been excited subsided, and people began to speak out. An application was made to the Court of Queen's Bench for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*. Affidavits were produced, and plans of the premises, all of which are in my possession, together with the primary examination. I would not venture to bring that case before the House on my own authority, but I will

read to the House an account of what occurred in the Court of Queen's Bench, as it has been drawn up by one of the gentlemen specially engaged in the transaction :—

“ The evidence being now complete, an application was made to the Court of Queen's Bench, before Mr. Justice Wightman, on the —— day of July. After hearing counsel in support of the case for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*, his Lordship expressed his willingness to issue an order to the authorities at the Convent to show cause why a writ should not issue. As this, however, would have prematurely opened a discussion in Court, the council, after a conference, intimated their willingness to abide by his definite decision. His Lordship, therefore, promised to take the affidavits home with him to peruse them, and to give his decision in the following week. . . . At the appointed time Justice Wightman stated that he had carefully read the evidence, but that he should have again to defer his decision, as it did not appear that any application had been made at the Convent for permission to see Miss ——” (this nun).

I will not give her name or those of others concerned (for I know not whether she is alive or dead), until this House may think fit to appoint a Committee, and thus to cast over the witnesses the protection of its authority. The narrative continues that Mr. Justice Wightman said—

“ An application must, therefore, be made for a private interview with her, to ascertain if she were confined against her will ; and, if refused, or, the permission being granted, she stated that she was so confined, then he would grant a writ. His Lordship said

it was a most interesting and uncommon case ; but as it was likewise a very important one, it was necessary that great circumspection should be used."

The persons whom the judge commissioned went down to Colwich, and the narrative goes on to say—

"Having met, we proceeded to the convent, and arrived at the door at 11.35 on the 14th of July. Being opened, I presented my card to the servant, who was dressed in black ; and on the request to see Mrs. —, the Mother Superior, we were shown into the visitors' waiting-room, a large, cheerless apartment, hung round with pictures of saints, and small coloured engravings with plain ungilt frames. At the end of the room was a large counter covered with oil-cloth, which entirely reached across the room and divided it into two parts. Behind this was a door. We had been kept waiting for about a quarter of an hour, when two nuns entered by the door behind the counter, and inquired our business, stating that the Mother Superior was much engaged. I said that we could not communicate the purport of our visit except to her, upon which they retired, having first requested to be present at the interview. Again we were left alone for about a quarter of an hour, and had ample time to canvass the dress and the manners of the Sisters of the Benedictine Order of Nuns. What we both remarked, apart from their picturesque dress, was the total absence of soul or animated expression in their faces. There was a coldness and want of feeling in their manner, which comported well with the appearance of the place, but it failed to impress or interest us in their behalf. If there was happiness in their hearts, the outward and visible sign was sadly wanting. After waiting what appeared to us a long time, Mrs. —,



the Mother Superior, entered, accompanied by two nuns. After saying that I presumed I was addressing the Mother Superior, to which she nodded assent, I told her that we had called as friends of Miss ——, and should be glad to be permitted to see her. She immediately replied that —— was not there, as she had left the convent several months before—early in May. I affected surprise, and inquired where she had gone to. Without hesitation, she replied that she had left there for a convent at Staplehill, near Wimborne, Dorsetshire; that she was not very well, and thought a change would be desirable. I expressed regret at not seeing her, and inquired particularly about her health, and whether she had heard from her. ‘Oh, yes,’ she replied, ‘I have received several letters from her, in which she describes the happiness which she enjoys in her new abode, and thanking me repeatedly for the undeviating kindness which she experienced while being here; the undeviating kindness’—repeating the words, but addressing me—‘perhaps you would like to see her letters; she writes in such excellent spirits.’ I thanked her for her courtesy, but assured her it was sufficient to know from her that my friend was happy, and again in the enjoyment of health. Alluding again to her leaving there, the Mother Superior said that Miss —— seemed to like a change, for she had been in several convents. After taking down the address, in case I might wish to write to her, we retired, thanking the Mother Superior for her kindness; for, the object of the visit being accomplished, so far as it could be, I was desirous of avoiding any questions, as they might have been inconvenient to answer.”

According to the directions received from Mr. Justice

Wightman, all these facts were reported to him, and he desired that the persons engaged in the inquiry should proceed to the Convent of Staplehill, near Wimborne, in Dorsetshire. They were the aged general officer who first saw the nun; his wife—a lady eminently qualified for the mission of charity which she undertook; and the gentleman who had written the account. They found at Staplehill a convent of apparently a totally different description. They had an interview with the nun, which the narrative from which I have these extracts describes as follows:—

“‘So,’ I said, ‘Miss ——, I have no time for trifling. When I tell you that for months past I have had but one object in view to serve you, and, if possible, to come to your rescue, and to accomplish this interview it has cost me nearly one hundred pounds in my efforts to trace you, I think you will admit that, although I am a perfect stranger to you, I am at least entitled to your candour.’ I shall not easily forget the earnest look which she gave me. ‘Oh, how can I thank you enough!’ she replied: ‘I did not know I had such a friend.’ . . . I then particularly inquired what her wish was, as, if she still wished to leave the convent, there was no law to prevent her doing so; and I promised her immediate assistance if she was confined against her will. ‘No,’ she said, ‘I have no wish to leave now. Since I came here I have been treated so kindly, it would be ingratitude in me to leave. The nuns here have treated me like a sister. No; I cannot leave now.’ Again she repeated—‘No; I cannot—I must not leave now. I embraced the convent life and took the veil at the early age of eighteen, with the earnest desire of devoting my best years to God, and

serving Him in a way I then considered most for His glory, and I cannot now turn my back upon Him.' I saw that her resolution was taken, and that it was vain to attempt to shake it. It appeared likewise to be a relief to her, as if she had now time to arrange her thoughts; and she quietly said,—‘What could I do if I left? All my relations and friends are Roman Catholics, and they would turn their backs upon me; and what do I know of life?’ ”

Now, this is a happy conclusion. This nun, who, according to the description given in the affidavits, was, at the period of her escape, emaciated, terror-stricken who had clambered over a wall and dropped nine or ten feet from it, who had fled across the fields, been pursued, captured, and returned to the convent, is found here completely changed in appearance, comfortable and happy. But, Sir, this is not the whole of the case. It will naturally be inquired why this nun should have escaped. And after it was known that the protection of English law would be extended to the inquiry by the authority of the Court of Queen's Bench, facts came out of which I will now give the House an indication. After the conversation with this nun at Staplehill had proceeded to the point I have mentioned, the person authorised by the judge to make the inquiry says:—

“I then informed her of the many affidavits which had been prepared with a view to obtaining a writ of *Habeas Corpus* if I had been denied that meeting, which very much astonished and amused her, and that very important evidence had been obtained respecting certain doings in the Convent at Colwich. I carefully marked the expression of her face, which at once assumed a very thoughtful aspect. I said, ‘Miss

——, it has been stated to us on oath that there are certain subterraneous cells at the convent called grottoes ; have you seen them ?' She was silent. I asked again—' Do you remember a girl named —— ?' She thought for a moment, and then asked if she was not a scholar in the convent school. She thought she had some recollection of her ; but it was several years since she was there. I then said that the late scholar had stated that she had seen a nun put into a cellar under the convent, and that she was found dead there ; and, I asked—' Have you any knowledge that such was the case ?' She remained silent. I say that silence was equivalent to an admission, and asked again—' Have you ever seen a nun put into a cellar ? Again she was silent. I did not press her further again on this point, as her resolute silence was to all of us sufficient proof of the truthfulness of the scholar's statement.' That statement was, and it stands in the affidavits, that the greatest severities were practised in that convent—that she had seen nuns imprisoned—that she had known them to be kept short of food—that she had seen one nun forced into this underground cell—that to the best of her belief she never came out alive—that she attended the service at her funeral, and saw her consigned to the grave in the convent burying-ground. Now, this evidence is corroborated by a large part of the evidence given of the twenty-seven witnesses who were examined upon the subject. It was proved that there were more burials within the precincts of the convent than appeared in the register of deaths. It was proved that coffins were seldom made outside the convent ; but that rough carpenters were employed within the establishment to make packing-cases, without any of the usual appurtenances, in which the bodies were committed to the grave. It is known that the most malig-

nant threats were used by persons connected with the convent against the production of the slightest evidence. It is a fact that, until Inspector Field came down, few of the witnesses who signed the affidavits could be induced to speak. I now ask whether I have not stated enough to induce the House to grant a Committee to ascertain the character of these establishments? The convent at Colwich, down to the year 1857, was a cloistered convent of one of the severest orders. The Convent of Wimborne seemed to be a happy home; but what does that prove against the necessity for inquiry? Nothing, if there be other convents which realise and deserve Liguori's description, and are real "hells upon earth" to unwilling nuns! Such are the facts I am prepared to prove by the production of the affidavits. I ask the House respectfully to grant this Committee, for the purpose of ascertaining the locality, the character, and the increase of these establishments. I do not ask the House to appoint this Committee for the purpose of even suggesting a remedy, but in order to furnish the House with information which might enable it, in its wisdom, to devise some means for the better protection of those who, in too many cases, are, I fear, helpless women. (Marked cheering.)

After a debate of some length, Mr. Newdegate's amendment was lost on a division—79 members voting for it, and 106 against it.



I.—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN  
REV. DR. ULLATHORNE AND MR. NEWDEGATE.

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BIRMINGHAM, 6th March, 1865.

SIR,—Although I have not the advantage of your personal acquaintance, your speech of last Friday in the House of Commons on the subject of Convents, and your direct use of my name, justify me in addressing you.

You have spoken of two communities of ladies, the one your neighbours in North Warwickshire, the other not very far off, in North Staffordshire. Of these ladies, though deserving as high respect as any of your countrywomen, you spoke in a way that nothing short of having been blinded by more designing persons can possibly palliate. I have been the ecclesiastical superior of one of these communities for eighteen years, and of the other since its foundation; and, after carefully reading the *Times*' report of your speech, I solemnly, and with full knowledge of the facts, declare that there is not a statement in it, so far as it concerns those convents, which is not substantially erroneous in what it directly or by implication alleges against them.

In the one convent referred to, whatever caves or cellars there may be were built by Lord Tamworth, the former owner of the house, for domestic purposes, and have been used for no other ever since. The other convent, nearer your residence, happens also to be built on inclined ground; and, as Dr. Newman was compelled to say in defence of his own Oratory, in 1851, "Catholics have a predilection for horizontal floors." A large structure, like a convent so situated, necessitates a considerable cellarage; but in every form and shape of denial I deny that in any part of those establishments there are, or ever have been, whether under or above ground, cells or cellars, apartments or contrivances of any kind, for the purpose or use of locking up, or de-

taining, or in any way restraining, the personal liberty of nuns, or any other persons whatever. I equally deny that any nun has ever been put into any bonds or chains, or anything of the sort; or that bars, grates, or locks have ever been used except to keep out thieves and intruders, or except to separate the internal from the domestic part of the establishment during the night; or to part the chancel of the church from the choir of the nuns, for which purpose there is a metal screen that anyone may see. There is also one room ranged for private interviews upon occasion between members of the community and their spiritual directors, and consequently parted into two compartments by a wooden screen.

I believe that the story about a nun having been seen in a wooden cage has been suggested by the sight of this parlour; and I believe that the other story, about a nun having been seen in chains, which I was recently challenged to contradict, originated from the simple fact that every nun carries a large rosary suspended by her side; a jingling sound from the links of such a rosary may have been heard while some nun, waiting in the confessional, was using it at her prayers, though it could not have been seen, even by persons passing into the vestry of the church, where the laity are admitted.

The history of the removal of the ladies who formerly occupied the convent in North Warwickshire is untrue in every point. Those excellent persons were once a flourishing community in Belgium, but had become reduced in number to a very few aged members; the house was too large for their needs, and they sold it to the present occupants, and retired to a smaller house in another part of the country.

The story of the lady who left her convent and came to Birmingham is misstated from beginning to end. I published an authentic statement of the facts in the newspapers at the time of the occurrence, which, possibly, has not come under your notice. The simple facts are these:—A lady who had been for many years a voluntary and contented member of the community petitioned her superiors to pass into a more austere order, on the plea of gaining greater spiritual perfection. Being one day at the convent on



business, the question was referred to me. On what I conceived to be prudential grounds, I counselled her to remain by preference under the milder observance to which she was habituated. I supposed the matter settled, and gave it no more thought; but after my return to Birmingham that night, to my surprise that lady came soon after to my house, having travelled in the same train with me without my knowing it. She told me she had left the convent unknown to the community, as any member of it might easily do, and had followed me to entreat that I would facilitate her transition to a more austere community, assuring me that she had not a complaint to make, but that she earnestly wished the change. I then said that consideration for her family and for all concerned required that this should be done in proper order; and that as she was bent upon it, if she would go back I would return with her, and there arrange for her going to the Cistercian Institute, as she so earnestly desired. And knowing that the community would be uneasy at the sudden disappearance of one of their members, I despatched a telegram to inform them that I was on the point of returning in company with her.

The privacy of the telegraph office was abused; an inquiry took place, and it was found to have been not a solitary instance. In short, the result of the inquiry, as reported to me by an officer of the company, differed in several particulars from that which you, Sir, have stated in Parliament.

After these events, hired spies were set about the establishment for weeks. An institution contrary to the spirit of the British Constitution was brought into play. A person who keeps what is called "a private inquiry office" was sent to ply his disgraceful trade among the working people employed by the convent. Had there been anything to be discovered, it must have been found out, and the public would have heard of it. But those illegal inquisitors, who were set to work by the Protestant Alliance, as we learn on your authority, ended their investigations in the same silence in which they began. They called at last at the convent, were courteously received, and when they asked for the lady

already spoken of, they were at once told that she had left for the Convent of Staplehill, in Dorsetshire (not Staplehurst, in Gloucestershire), the address of which was given them. You more than insinuate that a telegram had reached this lady before these people saw her. This is quite untrue, as there had been no communication with her. The very intimation implies that the interview did not furnish proof of what the inquisitors were in quest of. After a lapse of so many years, you now give us the first account of that interview from your own side; and I can only say that it is diametrically opposed to the account written at the time by the lady herself, and addressed to the sisters of her former convent. The lady herself left that convent also, after a time, at her own instance; and, after trying several others in France, she was finally, on her own petition, released from all conventual engagements.

I cannot content myself with this brief statement of the facts which have been so shamefully abused. I feel that I have another duty to these much-injured ladies. I wish to make a straightforward appeal to your own honour and right feeling as an English gentleman, as a man of good descent, a magistrate, and a neighbour of the ladies in question. I put it to you whether, supposing that what you have asserted before Parliament and the world respecting these convents and their inmates proves to be untrue, will it not follow, as a matter of course, that you have inflicted upon a number of innocent and accomplished ladies an amount of injury and wrong so grievous as to require all the reparation in your power?

Well, then, I will make you a fair proposal. Believing that, however much you have been misled, you have yet the mind and heart of a gentleman, I propose to give you a meeting at each of the convents in question. Let it be in the presence of some Protestant nobleman of the neighbourhood. I am not personally acquainted either with the Earl of Harrowby or the Earl of Litchfield, but they are generally known to be men of high character and staunch Protestants, as well as near neighbours of the principal convent of the two, and the one most brought into question. I feel

assured that neither of them would decline assisting in so great an act of humanity. I propose that you, in company with one or both of those noblemen, should go over the whole of the establishments as much as you like, and converse with the members of the communities as much as you desire. I have had no communication with the communities since I read your speech, nor shall I interfere myself further than by being at hand at the time of your visit, in order to facilitate your entrance, and to give any information required. I will leave you as much as you choose to yourselves, merely stipulating as a matter of delicacy to the ladies and their friends that a Catholic gentleman shall also be in your company; and if I mention the name of Lord Edward Howard, I do so, not that I have had any communication with him on the subject, but because he is a leading English Catholic member of Parliament.

Whilst I disclaim all right of inquisition into the domestic affairs of these ladies, as I do into those of any private family, for their vindication, on this one sole occasion, I make this offer, subject to the understanding that if, to the satisfaction of Lord Harrowby or Lord Litchfield, or both, it is proved that no grounds appear for the statements you have set before the world, you will then make these ladies a reparation as public as the injury you have inflicted.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant,

W. B. ULLATHORNE.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, ESQ., M.P.

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3, ARLINGTON STREET, PICCADILLY, March 7, 1865.

REV. SIR,—Your letter of the 6th of March reached me at 9.15 last night. I might fairly, as a member of the House of Commons, plead the privilege of the House against any further explanation or proof of the truth of what I stated on Friday last in my place, and I feel some hesitation in giving any further explanation, since the House refused to appoint

a committee to inquire into the facts which I alleged. You, Rev. Sir, do not stand in a very favourable position when you seem to feel compelled to suggest an inquiry into the facts which I alleged. Ever since the debates upon the Ecclesiastical Titles Act in 1851, the direct action of the hierarchy with which you are connected through or upon the Roman Catholic members of the House of Commons has been obvious to every member of the House, who has taken an interest in such questions as that debated on Friday last.

Lord Edward Howard, whom you suggest as a party to the private inquiry you propose, voted against the inquiry by a committee of the House of Commons, for which I moved. So did Sir George Bowyer; while Mr. Pope Hennessy and Mr. Vincent Scully both spoke and voted against the inquiry, as, I believe, did every other Roman Catholic member present on the division.

Had you and the hierarchy with which you are connected used your influence in favour of the legitimate inquiry I proposed, I have no doubt the House of Commons would have appointed a proper tribunal to undertake it, since 79 members voted for my motion, and only 106, including members of the Government, against it.

I utterly refuse to be any party to the private inquiry you propose.

I publicly named you, because I know that you assume to be the superior of the convents I mentioned—a fact which, in your letter, you admit—and that you are the person who is responsible for the return of the lady to the convent at Colwich, from which you do not deny that she had escaped.

You appeal to me as a gentleman, as a magistrate, and as a member of the House of Commons. In each of those capacities I refuse to avail myself of the authority over these convents which you assume, in order to intrude upon their inmates the sort of extra-judicial inquiry, you suggest, in the manner you propose.

But you are resident in Birmingham, and in the House of Commons I alluded to two convents in North Warwickshire, and I shall not permit your interpretation of what you

supposed that I said to pass without explanation on my part.

You have trusted to the report of what I said, which it given in the *Times* newspaper. That report is less full, and, therefore, less accurate than the reports in *Standard* and *Morning Post* newspapers. The report in the *Times* does not contain the documents which I read in the House. I regret this, and am not aware that I am in any way accountable for the omission ; but I see that in all the reports there is a confusion as to the convents in North Warwickshire to which I alluded. And this is not unnatural ; for when I was speaking of them there was a noise made at the end of the House, towards the bar, on the side on which I sit. These interruptions are not uncommon, and I turned my head from the reporters to see from whom this noise proceeded.

I alluded first to the convent at Princethorpe, with respect to the doors fixed in the underground cells or cellars, if you so please to describe these underground apartments of that convent, and to the locks placed upon those doors during the construction of that convent, with respect to which I received detailed information from the late Mr. Charles Ball, master builder at Nuneaton. I mentioned this information in the house of Commons first during the debate on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in 1851, and then in 1853, during the debate on the introduction of Mr. Chambers's bill for the inspection of convents. You were then superior of that convent. My assertion was never disproved ; and I must remind you that in an investigation such as I proposed on Friday last, mere unsupported denial would carry little weight.

I next alluded to the attempted escape from the convent at Atherstone, and to the fact that 15 cwt. of iron stanchions or bars were, immediately after the attempt to escape, affixed to the windows of that convent, and to the subsequent removal of the community of nuns who inhabited that convent (you do not deny the last of these facts, but account for it in your own way). When I stated these facts, as connected with this convent, in the same debate in 1853, the facts were denied by some Roman Catholic members in the House ;

but the impression produced by the statement of them; taken together with the other facts at the time alleged, was such that these denials could have had little weight with the House, for the majority seemed to think with the late Mr. Drummond, that the power of denial on the part of some Roman Catholic members of the House was on these subjects so wonderful that the House decided to consider a measure for testing these denials by the establishment of an inspection of convents.

My residence is not more than six miles from Atherstone, and I had made an investigation into the facts, I alleged, on the spot before I ventured to state them to the House.

Thus much I have replied with respect to the convents in North Warwickshire, of which I am one of the representatives in Parliament, and within which I act as a magistrate.

In conclusion, I revert to the convent at Colwich, in Staffordshire. All that I said with respect to that convent is based upon affidavits in my possession, which were submitted to the late Mr. Justice Wightman, as a judge in the Court of Queen's Bench, and upon a narrative of the occurrences, and conversation with the nun who escaped from the convent at Colwich, when seen in the convent at Winburn by direction of the judge. I possess an account of that interview and conversation, written by one of three persons present, all of whom have attested the accuracy of that account by their signatures. It is now eight years since the events connected with the escape of the nun, whom you took back to the convent at Colwich, occurred. I am in possession of the primary examinations and of the affidavits connected with that case, and of a plan of the buildings, and of the ground around that convent, made at that time, and supported by the evidence. I know not what alterations may have been subsequently made; all traces of them, if any have been made, are by this time, probably, so far obliterated as to render the discovery of any such alterations almost impossible during the casual visit, you propose.

The grass must have grown for years over the graves

within the precincts of that convent, and the inscriptions connected with some of them are probably effaced.

No, Reverend Sir, I will be no party to any such extrajudicial inquiry as you propose. Your letter, though bearing the semblance of fairness, is artistically written. There is a confusion as to times and places in it which warns me to be no party to any partial or local inquiry into the subject of the evidence, which I possess with respect to the convent at Colwich, and from which I spoke on Friday last.

You have assumed an authority dangerous from its extent in this country; you may think it right to do so, but you must abide the consequence of having so done. You will neither dissuade nor deter me from seeking the extension of the legitimate legal protection of the civil power of this Protestant country to the inmates of the convents within it, in the same sense in which it is extended to the authorised convents in France and other Continental countries. The means for exercising the civil power within and over the convents in England and Scotland has been by repeated majorities of the House of Commons declared inadequate. History and the current events of the time warn me that unless the civil power has free and ready scope within these convents, they ought not to be permitted to exist, though some—perhaps many—if you will, most of them—are well conducted.

I have no intention to insult any lady resident in any convent. My refusal to accept your proposal for an extrajudicial and irregular intrusion upon them is sufficient proof of this.

Had the House of Commons granted the committee, for which I moved, I should have called you as a witness, and among other questions I should have asked you two, which your letter shows that you are to a certain extent competent to answer. Those questions would have been—Where has the nun, whom you brought back, in December, 1856, to the convent at Colwich, been since her residence at Winburn? You say that she has subsequently been in convents abroad. Where is that lady now?

But the committee has been refused; and I refuse to put

these questions except at the proper time, in the proper manner, and in the proper place, and to accept any answer to them except under the above conditions.

Your letter throughout assumes that I shall consent to the kind of investigation into the affairs of these convents which I decline, but it concludes with these words, "You will make those ladies (the inmates of these convents) a reparation as public as the injury you have inflicted."

These words have decided me to seek the immediate publication of your letter and this reply. For if these ladies are injured by being denied legitimate means of defence and of reparation, their injury rests upon those who refused the inquiry before a committee of the House of Commons, for which I moved, not upon me.—I remain, Reverend Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

To the Rev. Dr. ULLATHORNE.

BIRMINGHAM, March 10.

SIR,—Your letter of the 7th inst. reached me the next evening, in which you decline the opportunity offered you of examining the other side of the case.

For eight years, by your own statement, you and your friends have been pursuing a private inquisition directed against a number of religious ladies, and have accumulated the secret results. For this *ex parte* budget of scandalous stories you appear to make yourself personally responsible; but the moment the doors of their establishments are thrown open to you, and you are invited to enter, and, on the common principles of justice, to look into their side of the case, as well as at your own statements, you "refuse to be any party to the private inquiry." You have intruded upon the world charges against them of gross and felonious conduct,



but you will not “intrude on them the sort of extra-judicial inquiry” suggested. The reasons you assign for this delicate line of conduct are—1, that Parliament refused you a committee of inquiry; 2, that I and others did not use our influence as Catholic bishops towards obtaining such a committee; 3rd, that Lord Edward Howard and other Catholic members voted with the majority.

Since reading your letter I have examined the report of your speech in the *Standard*. You mention that all the newspapers omitted your reference to Princethorpe in conjunction with the story of the locks. But what does the suspected crime amount to? Simply this—that, in the course of building that large establishment, nearly thirty years ago, the locks provided for certain cellar doors were not considered strong enough, and the builder was required to change them for better. The necessity of this provision appeared some years ago, when the convent was broken into, and a considerable amount of property plundered.

The word “cell” seems to lead to some confusion between convent cells and prison cells. A convent cell is nothing but a bedroom, occupying, as in other residences, the upper floors. There are no such things in convents as underground cells. I have already explained the real cause of the departure of the former community from Atherstone. For the “15 cwt. of stanchions,” if that quantity of iron was used, of which I am not aware, the reason for putting up bars to the windows was simply a burglarious entry from without, not an escape from within. There was no attempt of a nun to escape, and the story was contradicted and exposed in the local newspapers at the time.

The documents you quoted in your speech confirm all that I stated before I saw them. The simple, common-sense remark of Judge Wightman blew into the air all the string of tales your friends could heap together, and secured proof of the perfect liberty of the lady in question. Those documents also proved that when the spies called at Colwich they represented themselves as the personal friends of that lady, while in their interview with her they declared themselves to be perfect strangers. I have already said that for

years past that lady has, at her own request, been freed from all conventual engagements. I believe she is at present residing in France, but at what place I do not know, as she has changed more than once. It may be in the out-quarter of some convent, but certainly not within the enclosure, nor as a member of any community. I may say thus much more in justification of the ladies at Colwich, that they are in possession of several letters from her in which she has at different times entreated permission to return to them, alleging that she could never be so happy elsewhere.

I will offer but one remark more, and then I trust that my part of this correspondence is finished. You bring out a story purporting to come from a girl who had been in the poor-school formerly attached to the convent. It is a narrative how she, with her own eyes, "saw nuns imprisoned" and "kept short of food;" that she saw one nun "forced down into an underground cellar, who, to the best of her belief, never came out again." Why, this is but a repetition of the stale, old story of Maria Monk of thirty years ago. That was put down by a body of Protestant magistrates after a private investigation of the facts, such as you, Sir, have been invited to make for yourself. Let me now put the case as you actually maintain it, and I will then leave it to the common sense of the public. Here are some forty English ladies, of good or noble families, varying in age from 70 to 21; and here is an association of men of fortune and others pushing the spy system and every other engine of private inquisition that money and ingenuity can command against these ladies and their residence, for the space of eight years, taking plans of the ground, questioning servants and neighbours, and watching their every movement, even to the carpenter's work that goes in and out of the house; and what is the result? A poor girl is got to repeat a tale, only recalling old exploded fables, with twenty-seven witnesses dimly presented in the background as corroborating the story. Now, let common sense use its reflective powers for a single moment. These forty ladies, who are so shrewd as to defeat all the efforts of ex-Inspector Field and all the forces the Protestant Alliance can bring to bear upon them

for eight years, bring a girl from the poor-school into the interior of their convent, where, by the rules of the house, no such person can ever enter, and there let her witness the process of starving nuns, thrusting them into cellars, and leaving them there to die. And yet you, Sir, with all your faith in this wonderful legend, and with twenty-eight witnesses to back it, cannot get evidence enough for a warrant to inquire. And at the same time you refuse the free offer of inquiry without the necessity of a warrant.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant,

W. B. ULLATHORNE.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.

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3, ARLINGTON STREET, PICCADILLY, March 14.

REVEREND SIR,—On Friday last, the 10th, I found on arriving at Arbury at 6.15 p.m., a note from Mr. Pope Hennessy, intimating that he intended that evening to call the attention of the House of Commons to certain statements in my letter of the 7th inst., addressed to yourself. I replied, that owing to the delay in his letters reaching me, it was impossible that I should be in my place that evening. On Sunday morning, the 12th, I received your letter dated the 10th inst.; but seeing a Parliamentary notice to the same effect as his note in Mr. Pope Hennessy's name for yesterday evening, I have deferred answering your letter till to-day.

You have by this time seen in the *Times* of yesterday your letter addressed to myself, preceded by a letter from the Rev. Dr. Cumming, in which, on the authority of the late Cardinal Wiseman and the Rev. Dr. Manning, he gives a fair sketch of the politico-religious organisation of which you form a part, of some of its objects, and of part of its *modus operandi*.

You have also seen the report of what occurred in the House of Commons when Mr. Pope Hennessy put his question to me, and a leader in the *Times* of to-day in many respects adopting your version of the matter at issue between us.

I am perfectly aware of the great extent and completeness of the organisation, to which I am in your person opposed, and therefore treat with contempt the unfounded allegation that I am attacking ladies or women of any description. I know that the nuns in the convents at Princethorpe, at Atherstone, and at Colwich, are considered by the Papacy, whose officer you are, your subjects, and that they are taught so to consider themselves. I, therefore, have throughout treated you as assuming yourself to be the Superior—*i.e.*, Governor—of those convents. I have never presumed to interfere with those nuns, who choose to remain of their own free will in the position of being your subjects, except so far as they have, as your agents, interfered with the right of others to relieve themselves from that position. All such restraint of unwilling inmates of convents, though quite consonant with the laws of the Papacy, of which you are an officer, is contrary to the laws of this country (under which I hold a commission as magistrate for two counties), and is, moreover, contrary to the feelings and opinions of the people of this country, of which I have abundant evidence in the letters I have received.

Your theory seems to be, that no inspection of convents but by yourself and your colleagues is necessary. You, notwithstanding, in one case offer an inspection of another kind. This is a tribute to the force of public opinion. If a private inquiry be in any sense desirable, an inquiry by public authority is more so; for the object is public, and the interests of a considerable number of the Queen's subjects are involved.

If there be nothing to conceal, then, why object to an inquiry under public authority? Should the result of such an inquiry prove that I am utterly mistaken, I should rejoice; and those who think with me on this subject would be satisfied. The mere circumstance of a conflict of opinion

upon facts, is of itself proof of the necessity for such an inquiry, as I have proposed.

To revert to your letter of the 10th inst., you write of myself with respect to the Colwich case:—"You decline the opportunity offered you of examining the other side (*i.e.*, your own) of the case;" and again, "and at the same time you refuse the free offer of inquiry without the necessity of a warrant."

These allegations refer to your letter of the 6th inst., which was published in the *Times* of the 9th, in which you propose that I should go down to the convent at Colwich, in company with Lord Harrowby, or Lord Litchfield, and Lord Edward Howard, or some other Roman Catholic nobleman or gentleman, and there by and under your assumed authority, inspect the present state of the convent at Colwich, and converse with the inmates, you being at hand the while as supervisor of these proceedings. You probably are aware that I am not a magistrate for Staffordshire; but you would have it appear that I am both unreasonable and unfair, because I refuse to lend my sanction and to aid in inducing the Protestant noblemen, you mention, to lend their sanction to your assumed authority over the inmates of the convent at Colwich; and this, too, when one object of my motion for a committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the existence, character, and increase of conventual or monastic establishments or societies was to check the authority which you assume, by eliciting information which might induce and enable the House of Commons to pass some measure which might effectually interpose and extend the authority of the State and of the law of this country, so as that this legitimate authority might become prompt and effectual for ensuring the personal safety and freedom of the inmates of the 201 convents in England and Scotland. My compliance with your invitation would have been totally inconsistent with this object, which I am far from having abandoned. Again, you choose to ignore the fact, that my whole statement regarding the convent at Colwich related to and rested upon evidence with respect to the construction and condition of that establishment up to the spring of 1857, and you make

this general assertion :—“There are no such things in convents as underground cells.”

I am in possession of the sworn evidence of several competent witnesses, that at the Colwich Convent, in 1857, there were underground apartments, called “the Grottoes.” Your statement induces me to believe, that it is possible that these may have been filled up, or otherwise destroyed during the eight years that have elapsed since this evidence was given. I hope it may be so ; and if so, it is palpable that it must be most improbable that I should be able, during the casual visit you have proposed, to trace the slightest proof of the existence of these cells, at the period to which the evidence relates ; and if such should have been the result of my accepting your invitations, the only effect would be to cast a doubt upon the evidence, which had the committee I moved for been granted, or should such an inquiry hereafter take place, I am prepared to adduce—that there are underground apartments or cells connected with other convents. No, reverend Sir, you will not induce me, whatever use you may attempt to make of my refusal, to accept your invitation to visit the convent at Colwich under your auspices, or to do anything to strengthen the mistaken belief you desire to propagate, “that there are no such things in convents as underground cells.”

Again you write (I refer to your letter of the 10th), “These 40 ladies, who are so shrewd as to defeat all the efforts of Inspector Field and all the forces the Protestant Alliance can bring to bear upon them for eight years, bring a girl from the poor school into the interior of the convent, where, by the rules of the house, no such person can ever enter, and there let her witness the process of starving nuns, thrusting them into cellars, and leaving them there to die.”

Now, this is a citation *ad invidiam* of the evidence of one witness, with whose evidence as to parts of it which I did not adduce to the House of Commons, you showed in your letter of the 6th inst. a previous acquaintance. You assume that the portions of this evidence which I did adduce are unsupported by other evidence in my possession. If this

assumption on your part is made in good faith, you are very much mistaken. I adduced in the House of Commons on the 3rd of March the main points of this person's evidence as corroborated by other evidence in my possession, and a strong confirmation of the truth of this evidence on these points was afforded by the resolute silence of the nun, who had escaped from the convent at Colwich, on these very points, when questioned at Staplehill alone by the persons, who saw her under directions from Mr. Justice Wightman, of whom you write:—"The simple common-sense remark of Judge Wightman blew into the air all the string of tales your friends could heap together, and secured proof of the perfect liberty of the lady in question."

It is rather difficult to understand, or rather to measure, what you mean by "the simple common-sense remark of Judge Wightman;" he heard a statement of the evidence, on which I rely, in court, and then expressed his willingness to issue an order to the authorities of the (Colwich) convent to show cause why a writ of *Habeas Corpus* should not issue; he subsequently took the affidavits home and read them, and afterwards stated in court that "it was a most interesting and uncommon case, and as it was likewise a very important one, it was necessary that great circumspection should be used." He subsequently decided that the application to see this nun at Colwich should be made. This was done, and when it was alleged that the nun had been removed to Staplehill, that a like proceeding should be adopted there, which led to the conversation between the nun and the persons sent by the judge, that I detailed in the House of Commons on the 3rd inst.

I freely admit that the nun—who, according to the evidence in my possession, in order to escape from the Colwich Convent, climbed over an enclosure wall 9 ft. high by the aid of the branches of a tree which chanced to overhang the wall and of the strong ivy which at that time (December, 1856) grew upon it—stated, when seen at Staplehill, that she remained at that time of her own free will in that convent; but upon your own showing she did not continue an inmate of that convent,

The inmates and the discipline of these convents seem to change not unfrequently, and I have reason to believe that the degrees of severity with which the discipline is applied to individuals is changed still more frequently; and, consequently, the discipline, which may be tolerable, or even desirable, to an inmate of a convent at one time may be the very reverse at another.

The treatment of this nun at Colwich appears to have given her deep cause for dissatisfaction, and apparently with reason, as the evidence of her wretched condition, when escaping, proves. She seems to have been contented and well-cared for when seen in Staplehill Convent. Her better treatment at Staplehill during part of the five months, during which the inquiry was prosecuted into her case, and what you call "the common-sense remarks of the judge of the Court of the Queen's Bench," probably also the knowledge of part of the authorities of Staplehill Convent of the attention, which was directed to her case, may have had much to do with the kind treatment of this nun at that time. But there is no proof that this kind treatment continued; on the contrary, you admit that she left that convent, and you write of it as a convent of a severe discipline. It may not have been severe to this nun at the time of the interview to which I have referred; but Mr. Lacy, who, as a member of the House of Commons, introduced a bill for the inspection of convents in 1851, has written to refer me to his speech in *Hansard* on that occasion, in which he cited an instance of the escape of a nun from the convent at Staplehill on the authority of a Dissenting minister, Mr. Hawke, who most kindly harboured this nun after her escape, and to whom this escaped nun described the discipline at Staplehill at that time, as most severe—that of the order of La Trappe. It is quite possible that before she left the convent at Staplehill, near Wimborne, the nun who escaped from the convent at Colwich may have been made to feel the discipline of the convent at Staplehill no less severe than that, which she had experienced at Colwich; for nuns who escape or attempt to escape from their convents (I am assured, however gently treated for a time, perhaps from motives of policy on the



part of the authorities under whom they are placed) are apt in the long run to be made to feel something of the severity, which Liguori so vividly describes as applied to unwilling nuns.

I trust that those, whom the laws of this country consider her natural protectors, have some more definite knowledge of the ultimate fate of the nun, who escaped from the convent at Colwich, and then quitted that at Staplehill, than you seem to possess.

But, reverend Sir, you may be satisfied with the result of my motion for a committee of inquiry. You may think fit to taunt me with refusing the irregular and unauthorised visitation of the convent at Colwich you proposed; you may think that by maintaining the secrecy, which envelopes these convents and the condition of their inmates, that you are doing your duty by the power under which you assume to exercise authority within this country. I am equally satisfied that I have done and am doing my duty, and I feel very confident, that ere long you will find a determination grow up, first among the people of this country, and then in the Legislature, that England shall not be the only country in Europe in which measures are not taken to check the kind of authority, that you assume to exercise over English women, by the effectual interposition of that national power, of which their Queen is and ought to be the sole exponent and administrator through her authorised officers within these her lawful dominions.—I have the honour to remain, Rev. Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

The Rev. Dr. ULLATHORNE, Birmingham.

## II.—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN

THE

HON. MR. LANGDALE AND MR. NEWDEGATE.

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THE STAFFORD CLUB, Savile Row, March 13.

SIR,—My excuse for calling your attention to a statement respecting the convent at Colwich in your speech in the House of Commons on the 3rd of March last, is that I have a sister in that convent, where she has been a nun for the last twenty years. She must, therefore, have been cognisant of, or possibly a victim to, the atrocities you describe. I hardly know which alternative is the more painful.

You must not imagine that the fact of her being a nun makes my sister less dear to me. Her honour and well-being are matters that concern me as nearly as ever.

Therefore, Sir, I feel it a duty to call your attention to the following extract from your speech, taken from the *Standard* of March 4th. That statement (viz., “of a girl named ——”) was “that she saw nuns imprisoned in that convent, that she knew them to be kept short of food, that she saw one nun forced down into this underground cell—that to the best of her belief she never came out alive. . . . Now this evidence is corroborated by twenty-seven witnesses. . . . It was proved that there were more burials within this convent than appeared on the register of deaths.”

Now, Sir, do I understand you rightly? Do you mean to insinuate that, at any time during the last twenty years, any nun or inmate of the convent at Colwich has been subjected to the cruel treatment you describe, has been imprisoned in an underground cell, has been left there till death? Do you mean to assert that during that period any nun or

inmate of that convent has been clandestinely buried? Am I to understand that your twenty-seven witnesses can substantiate all these charges, or any of them? If this is your meaning, I call on you to come out of your privileged position, and to make these charges in such a way as will enable those whom you accuse, or their friends, to test the truth of your statements.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES LANGDALE, Jun.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.

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3, ARLINGTON STREET, PICCADILLY, March 15.

SIR,—I much regret to find that a mistake in the address of my reply to your letter of the day before yesterday has delayed your receipt of it. The report of the portion of my speech which you quote from the *Standard* may not be exactly accurate; but the general report of the evidence from which I cited that passage is very much to the effect of the report.

Had I not been in possession of the affidavits, which contain corroborative evidence to the effect I stated, I should not have cited the portion of the evidence to which you especially refer.

I was sincerely anxious that this portion, as well as other portions of the evidence, should be tested by the Committee for which I moved; but the members who are of your religion voted against the inquiry, I proposed, and if you feel aggrieved that this evidence is not tested, you must blame those who opposed my motion, not myself. I must, however, decline your application, as I declined Dr. Ullathorne's invitation to visit the convent at Colwich. I was quite prepared to submit the evidence from which I spoke on the 3d, and to which you refer, as part of the matter which a Committee of the House of Commons should investigate, but not

as the sole matter of investigation. I cannot consent to remove this matter from the House of Commons for the purpose of having it investigated elsewhere. Should you be in possession of evidence that will refute that which I cited, I have no doubt that there are Members in the House who will undertake at your instance to produce in the House of Commons that which you may consider a refutation. Except for the sake of that, which I consider, and which was considered by at least seventy-nine members, who voted for my motion, an important public object, I should never have referred to a subject, which appears to have caused you, and may have caused others, some annoyance; but if my motion has no other effect than causing yourself and other gentlemen of the Roman Catholic religion to devote more attention to the convents in England, and to the treatment of their inmates, it will, in my opinion, have been productive of at least one beneficial result.—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

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STAFFORD CLUB, March 17.

SIR,—There has been some delay in your letter reaching me in consequence of your having addressed it to my father, who is unfortunately not equal to a prolonged correspondence. This is the only reason for my undertaking what I assure you I feel to be a painful duty.

You decline to meet my challenge to have your statement tested by a competent tribunal. The case, therefore, between us stands thus:

You, a gentleman and a magistrate for two counties, charge a community of ladies living in your own district with practices not merely wicked but felonious. You say you can support this charge by twenty-seven witnesses. You are asked to come into court and have the case fully investigated, and you decline to do so.

You, a gentleman and a member of Parliament, make a statement in your place in the House of Commons involving a grievous stain on the character of certain ladies, and then, under the shelter of your privilege, you deny them and their families the opportunity of vindicating their honour by disproving your charges.

After this, I am much mistaken if the public will deem it a fitting reply on your part to appeal again to a committee, which has already been refused by the House of Commons. In default of this, you tell me you have no doubt I can find some members who will undertake to produce "what I consider a refutation." I incline to think that after the publication of this correspondence, no further refutation will be necessary. But for the satisfaction of others, I will state now on my honour what I would have proved, if you had given me the opportunity, in a court of justice.

That the statement of "the girl named ——" is a tissue of falsehoods. The girl referred to was a Protestant child, whom the nuns out of kindness allowed to attend their day school. She never was inside the convent in her life, further than the school-room, or perhaps the parlour.

There neither are, nor ever were, any underground cells. The cellars which do exist are filled with wood, coals, coke, roots and bottles.

No nun or other inmate of the convent was ever imprisoned or kept without food, or subjected to any ill usage whatever. No death ever occurred which was not duly registered, and no one was ever buried except in a coffin of the ordinary shape.

As one result of this correspondence, I trust, will be to show that Roman Catholic gentlemen are not so indifferent to the treatment of the inmates of convents in England as you seem to suppose, I shall take the liberty of publishing it.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. LANGDALE, Jun.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.

3, ARLINGTON STREET, Piccadilly, March 17.

SIR,—I have referred to your letter of the 13th, and to a copy of my reply, and I do not understand what you mean, as applied to myself, by the following paragraph in your letter of to-day :—

“ You decline, Sir, to meet my challenge to have your statement tested before a competent tribunal.”

The statement which I made in the House of Commons, and to which you refer, consisted in an avowed citation of sworn evidence in my possession. That evidence was collected, after an inquiry of about five months, by competent persons for submission to the Court of Queen’s Bench. The only reason that it was not brought into court and there tested by cross-examination was, that it was found that the nun, for whose liberation this preparation had been made, had been removed from the convent to Staplehill, which, at the time when she was seen by direction of Judge Wightman, she refused to leave.

This evidence I proposed to submit to a committee of the House of Commons, which was refused at the instance of the Roman Catholic members of the House. I do not, therefore, understand what you mean by the expression I have quoted from your letter of to-day. I have no wish to dispute the sincerity of your belief, that the evidence in my possession is untrue ; but you may rest assured that I will not submit this evidence to any tribunal but such as I consider competent—such as a Committee of the House of Commons—since this evidence relates to events which occurred more than eight years ago.

I felt bound to reply to the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne, because I named him in the House of Commons, and because he claims to be the Superior governing the convent at Colwich, and was a party to the transaction to which the evidence relates. I have thus far replied to you, because you stated that you have a relative in the convent at Colwich ; but I will no further waive the privilege which guards freedom of debate in the House of Commons ; since I see plainly that those con-

needed with persons in these convents might inflict a practical penalty upon all mention of convents by any member of the House, if the member who alludes to them is to be held bound to appear before any tribunal, which persons who may deem themselves affected by his statement might extemporise for his annoyance.

I have no wish to prevent your publishing this correspondence if you think fit to do so, reserving, of course, the same discretion to myself.—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

The Hon. C. LANGDALE, Jun., Stafford Club.

*N.B.*—My letter of the 17th was delivered by my servant at the Stafford Club, on the same day that Mr. C. Langdale's second letter was received by me, *i.e.*, on the 17th, which date it bears. The following letter was received by me on the 19th of March, at Arbury, near Nuneaton.

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

4, QUEEN STREET, MAYFAIR, March 18.

SIR,—Your letter of yesterday has reached me, and I regret that the previous portion of the correspondence has already been despatched to the following papers:—*The Times*, *Standard*, and *Daily Telegraph*. I mention them in case you wish to forward yours of yesterday for publication with the others.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. LANGDALE, Jun.

C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.

### III.—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SIR CHARLES CLIFFORD AND MR. NEWDEGATE.

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COLDHAM-HALL, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, March 23.

SIR,—The correspondence between yourself and Mr. Langdale has been brought to my notice. I should not have deemed it requisite to address you on the subject, had it not been for the concluding sentence in one of your letters, in which you infer that the relations and friends of ladies resident in convents in England, have not hitherto given attention to their condition and to the treatment of their inmates.

I cannot allow an inference so devoid of truth to pass without remark. I have a sister who was a nun in the convent at Colwich at the date of the charges you bring against that convent, and who is now the Superioress of the convent at Atherstone, which you have also attacked. From the relationship mentioned above, I have taken very great interest in the convents named by you, and “paid much attention to the treatment of their inmates;” and I am in a position to assure you, that you have been grossly deceived by your informants, and that your “twenty-seven witnesses,” if their evidence amounted to anything at all, have either shamelessly perjured themselves or were prepared to do so. I can hardly hope that anything I can say will induce you to alter your expressed determination not to leave your privileged position, and thus allow a refutation of the grave charges made in your place in the House of Commons; yet I think you must recognise a great difference between Catholic members of



Parliament objecting to the Legislature appointing a committee to pry into the private affairs and social arrangements of ladies living in communities and relatives of those ladies requiring proofs of charges, affecting their individual character.

The regulation and order of convents and the treatment of ladies within them are well known, not only to every Catholic nobleman and gentleman in England, but to many Protestants also ; under these circumstances, I hope that you will still embrace the opportunity offered to you of being undeceived in your ideas of their condition, and thus be enabled to make the *amende* to ladies at least the equals of your sisters or your daughters.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES CLIFFORD.

To C. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P., 3, Arlington Street,  
Piccadilly.

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ARBURY, NUNEATON, March 25.

Mr. Newdegate presents his compliments to Sir Charles Clifford, and regrets that Sir Charles Clifford should consider Mr. Newdegate's reply to the Hon. Charles Langdale, jun., discourteous or insufficient ; since it is evident that Sir Charles Clifford, when he wrote his letter of the 23rd, did not anticipate that Mr. Newdegate could consistently, under existing circumstances, make any other or further reply than he has made to the Hon. Charles Langdale, jun. Mr. Newdegate, therefore, does not consider any further apology for or explanation of this reply necessary.

Sir CHARLES CLIFFORD, Knight, Coldham-hall,  
Bury St. Edmunds.

COLDHAM-HALL, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, March 28.

Sir Charles Clifford begs to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Newdegate's letter of the 25th, received last evening, in which Mr. Newdegate professes to regret that Sir Charles should consider his reply to Mr. Langdale discourteous and insufficient. That reply, containing no apology for grievous slanders against a near relative, adds the further insult of inferring, that the Catholic nobility and gentry of England are indifferent to the treatment of their sisters and daughters. Sir Charles certainly did not anticipate that Mr. Newdegate would make any other or further reply, but that he could and ought to have done so Sir Charles is persuaded will be the opinion of the large majority of Englishmen. Mr. Newdegate has, under the shelter of a privileged position, cast the most shameful imputations upon a community of ladies of whom Sir Charles's sister is one, and when asked for proof or retraction has again availed himself of his privilege to refuse either.

Sir Charles Clifford is of opinion that Mr. Newdegate is guilty either of compounding a felony, or of refusing to make the only reparation in his power, by acknowledging, that the evidence collected in such underhand ways is utterly worthless and untrue. Sir Charles is happy in believing that Mr. Newdegate is the only man, who, after endeavouring to inflict so cruel an injury, would have followed the course he has chosen—a course which must be reprobated by every English gentleman.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., 3, Arlington Street,  
Piccadilly.

#### IV.—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN

THE

REV. J. AKEROYD AND MR. NEWDEGATE.\*

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ARBURY, NUNEATON, July 17th, 1865.

Mr. Newdegate presents his compliments to the Rev. J. Akeroyd, and begs to know whether he was the person who addressed him (Mr. Newdegate) in the street at Rugby, at about 4.30 P.M. to-day, on his way from the Town Hall to the George Hotel.

The Rev. J. AKEROYD, Dunchurch Road, Rugby.

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RUGBY, July 19th, 1865.

SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your note—by mistake, I assume, dated the 17th instant instead of the 18th.

In reply, I beg to say that after an elector (Mr. William Flint), with whom I was yesterday talking in the High Street, had spoken to you with reference to your continual

\* This correspondence refers to circumstances which occurred during the contested election for North Warwickshire, after a meeting of the electors for Rugby and its vicinity had been disturbed by a certain number of not, apparently, very respectable persons.

attacks on convents, I addressed you with the intention of conveying to you my assurance that the *whole* of the story as to the convent at Princethorpe, detailed by you in your place in the House of Commons, was a "fabrication," as I, to a great extent, know of my own knowledge. I fear that, in the heat and excitement of the moment, I may have used a stronger word than "fabrication," and said it was a "lie." If I did so, I beg you to understand that I had not the slightest intention of being personally offensive to you, and now withdraw and retract any expression that may have fallen from me, which might by any possibility be construed into such an offence. At the same time I may be allowed to say, that on all subjects relating to the Catholic religion, and which appear to have for you a peculiar attraction, and which are spoken of and brought forward by you in language and manner most strongly calculated to rouse the passions of those calumniated and their friends, you must expect Catholics both to think and speak of you with profound indignation, for the course you continue to pursue with reference to matters which are regarded by Catholics with the highest esteem and respect.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

JOSEPH AKEROYD.

To C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq.

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ARBURY, NUNEATON, July 21, 1865.

REVEREND SIR,—I was unable to acknowledge your letter of the 19th yesterday, owing to the number of my engagements, and regret that there should have been an error in the date of my letter of the 18th. This, however, you have corrected.

I accept your apology for having used the word "*lie*," as applied to the statement which I made in the House of Com-

mons, with respect to the convent at Princethorpe, so far as the terms of your letter of the 19th convey an apology. Into the substance of the statement to which you referred I shall not further enter than by observing that if I had not reason to believe that statement to be true, I should not have uttered it. You must, however, excuse my remarking that the expressions you used in addressing me on the 18th, in the midst of an excited crowd, were not calculated to preserve the peace of the town of Rugby. As to the opinion which you have thought fit to express upon my public conduct, I shall at present make no further observation than that I think it ill-founded; but of this I am confident, and am supported by the opinion of several persons, who heard what passed between us on the 18th, that on the only occasion upon which, to the best of my memory, I ever spoke to you, my conduct cannot fairly suffer by comparison with your own.—I have the honour to remain, Rev. Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

The Rev. J. AKEROYD, Dunchurch Road, Rugby.

*P.S.*—As the occurrence to which these letters refer was public in Rugby, I shall publish this correspondence.

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ST. MARY'S, RUGBY, July 21st, 1865.  
Nine o'clock, P.M

SIR,—I have just received your letter of to-day's date. I beg to assure you that I fully concede to you that you would not make any statement, which you did not believe to be true; your character as a gentleman in this county stands sufficiently high to forbid such a supposition.

In addressing you as I did on the 18th, I had not the

slightest thought nor could I suppose that anything I could say would be of that importance as to have any effect on the peace of the town of Rugby, and I take this opportunity of assuring you that you very much mistake the character of the priesthood in this country, if you fancy they desire anywhere to foment disturbances, either by inflammatory appeals to the vulgar passions of a mob (such as, alas, Protestant gentlemen too often indulge in), or by the more unobtrusive influence of their teaching and practice.

I understand (perhaps only on mere rumour) that the article in the Birmingham Conservative daily paper of the 19th emanated either from you or your party. If so, I beg to say that the statements therein made, so far as they relate to St. Mary's College, are (unfortunately so much like most of what we have lately heard in the House of Commons) not founded on fact; and, if you will give me credit for sincerity, I can distinctly declare that neither I nor any of the authorities, students, or persons connected with the College—ay, and I will go so far as to say that no Catholic of Rugby—had anything whatever to do with originating, planning, or carrying out, the opposition at the meeting of the 18th, which, unfortunately, prevented me availing myself of the opportunity I had long sought, of publicly questioning you as to the nature and effect of the evidence, on which you grounded your late attacks upon our convents and houses of religious women; face to face I might have been more powerful in this respect than the many strong epistolatory appeals, that have been made to you, without eliciting anything more than answers, which you will pardon me for designating as evasive in the highest degree. I cannot attempt to controvert the comparison, you are pleased to draw between your own conduct and mine; but this I will say, that insults offered in cold blood receive, sometimes, a quick and speedy rebuke, dictated by the honest feeling of the person insulted.

As you intimate to me, without reference to my feelings on the subject, that you propose to publish this correspondence, permit me to say that I also shall send copies, includ-

ing this letter, to the local papers, and probably to the *Times*.  
—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOSEPH AKEROYD.

C. N. NEWDEGATE, Esq., M.P.

*P.S.*—Saturday morning, 10 A.M.—I find the *Rugby Advertiser* has already published the letters that have passed between us. I should have thought that you would have given me the opportunity of placing this letter in your hands before sending to the press.

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ARBURY, NUNEATON, July 24th, 1865.

REVEREND SIR,—Your letter, dated the 21st inst., but concluded on Saturday last, reached me yesterday (Sunday) morning.

The first paragraph of your letter somewhat extends your previous apology for the language which you addressed to me on the 18th in the street of Rugby; I must, however, remind you that I had never spoken to you, when (and of what then occurred there are several competent witnesses) you came up to me in the street, and at once told me that the statement I had made in the House of Commons, with respect to the convent at Princethorpe, was "*a lie*." I am glad that you have retracted that expression. I then knew, and now know, nothing of the conversation which had previously passed between yourself and other persons, but I saw from your dress, that you appeared to be a clergyman or a minister of some denomination, Roman Catholic, as I thought, and I replied to that effect, and that your language was unbecoming, which you have now admitted.

You write that you had desired to have publicly questioned me at the Rugby meeting as to the statements I made in the House of Commons on the 3rd of March last. You are evi-

dently aware of the correspondence which took place between Dr. Ullathorne, Mr. Langdale, and myself, since you state that in your opinion my answers to these persons were evasive. Such is not my opinion.

Had you publicly questioned me, you would have received the same answer in substance as I have given to those persons—to the effect that I moved for a Committee of the House of Commons, before whom the evidence in support of my statements of the 3rd March should have been investigated. This committee was refused at the instance of the Roman Catholic members of the House. I subsequently found that the persons, to whom I have referred, and some others, were attempting to take the questions I had raised by my motion out of the purview of Parliament, by subjecting me to systematic annoyance. I then declared that I would not allow my statements of the 3rd of March to be exempted from the Privilege of the House of Commons, of which I was and am again a member. I declared the Privilege of Parliament, not merely to protect myself from annoyance, but because I have no right to expose the witnesses (whom I must call to prove the truth of my statements), unprotected by the Privilege of Parliament, to the annoyance, to which, unless guarded by that Privilege they might be exposed. I now repeat my declaration.

You allude to an article which appeared in the *Birmingham Gazette*, and seem to wish me to assume the responsibility of the editor of that paper. I have too much common sense, I hope, but certainly too much respect for the freedom of the press, to do anything of the kind.—I have the honour to remain, Rev. Sir, your obedient servant,

C. N. NEWDEGATE.

To the Rev. JOSEPH AKEROYD,  
Dunchurch Road, Rugby.



## V.—THE COLWICH NUNNERY CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

Sir,—I feel reluctantly compelled to notice a remark of your correspondent "A Catholic," in your impression of yesterday, as he evidently knows nothing of the case, except, perhaps, from those who are interested in suppressing inquiry into the facts.

He says,—“What was the upshot of the Colwich affair? You know perfectly well the whole story was proved to be a lie.” Now, so far from this being so, there has rarely, if ever, occurred a case in connexion with the conventual system in England in which a larger mass of reliable evidence has been procured, and it would be unfair to Mr. Newdegate, who has more than once alluded to this case in the House of Commons, if I hesitated to refute the statement I refer to.

Now, what are the facts of the story which is said to be “a lie?” I speak from having personally investigated them at the time, and, as a writ of Habeas Corpus was applied for before Mr. Justice Wightman, every circumstance was deposed to on oath, the affidavits being now in my possession. From them I can prove the following, so that the case is removed from the vague and uncertain:—That on the afternoon of the 30th of December, 1856, a nun escaped from the Convent of Colwich, on the Trent Valley Railway; that she escaped over the garden wall, nine feet high, by means of some overhanging branches (which a few days after were cut off), and fell to the field below; that she was seen and conversed with by the station-master and porters at the station adjoining; that she was wretchedly clad for the weather, and evinced great fear and trepidation; that, after waiting in the ladies room, she went to Stafford by the 2.13 train (Dr. Ullathorne followed by the 3.12 train); that at Stafford station she was seen by several, especially by Mr. Thomas Taylor, of Rugeley, a retired officer, who was just leaving by train, but he particularly remarked her appearance and distress; that she afterwards went in the same train to Birmingham as did Dr. Ullathorne; that from there he telegraphed to the Convent at Colwich that he would return with her the same night, and that they did so return; that the name of the lady was Catherine Selby (the name is now for the first time published); that she was 42 years of age, was born in Middlesex, and was a member of a Roman Catholic family.

So far as to the escape. I wish further to state that by the instruc-

tions of Mr. Justice Wightman I went, July 20, 1857,\* accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, to the convent at Staplehill, near Wimborne, Dorsetshire, and had a private interview with Miss Selby. Being alone, I told Miss Selby of the efforts which had been made to assist her, of the particulars of the escape at Colwich which were known, and of certain statements which had been deposed to as having occurred in the convent; to all which she was silent, although she had previously spoken freely. I urged twice that silence meant consent, but she remained silent. I then informed her that if she desired to leave the convent the law would offer her ample protection, and that she could leave if she wished. I shall never forget the scene; her emotion was great, and she sat for some time with her face buried in her hands. At last she exclaimed, "No, I cannot leave now; I have no wish to leave now; since I came here I have been very kindly treated." Upon being again pressed, she said, "No, I cannot, I must not, leave. I embraced the convent life at the early age of eighteen, with the earnest desire of devoting my best years to God, and serving Him in a way I then considered most for His glory, and I cannot now turn my back upon Him." Her resolution being taken the conversation changed; she informed us somewhat of her family, and then said, "What could I do if I left? All my relations and friends are Roman Catholics, and they would turn their backs upon me; and what do I know of life?"

I have given the conversation very briefly, as I would not intrude upon your space, but I may mention that I afterwards drew up a report of our interview with Miss Selby, which was certified by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor as being "correctly and truthfully given in all its details," their signatures being witnessed.

For myself I am naturally glad that Mr. Newdegate's motion has met with so much acceptance in the House of Commons; there are ample materials for the inquiry.

That there is happiness in some convents is proved by the admirable letter of Lady Gertrude in your to-day's issue; but there are two sides to every question, and I think I have conclusively proved there is something more than "a lie" in the Colwich case, and that constraint and severity must exist in some convents, and notably in the one referred to, or a high-born lady, at the age of forty-two years of age, would not have made the desperate efforts to escape which I have described.

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES B. MANDER, J.P.

THE MOUNT, Wolverhampton, April 12.

—*Times*, 14th April, 1870.

\* The date is 1857, not 1858, as printed in the *Times* of the 14th.



